



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

2 45 0270 2148



LANE MEDICAL LIBRARY STANFORD

Anniversary address.

J. Mauran.

R
708
M45
1869
LANE
HIST

LANE

MEDICAL



LIBRARY

**HISTORY OF MEDICINE
AND NATURAL SCIENCES**



ANNIVERSARY ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

OF THE

College of Physicians and Surgeons,

MEDICAL DEPARTMENT OF COLUMBIA COLLEGE,
NEW YORK CITY,

BY J. MAURAN, A. M., M. D., ETC.,
PRESIDENT OF THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION,

March 2d, 1869.

"Nominem pagina nostra sapit."

—♦—
JAN 1 1870

PROVIDENCE:
HAMMOND, ANGELL & CO., PRINTERS.
1869.

CORRESPONDENCE.

ALUMNI ASSOCIATION, COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS, }
Medical Department of Columbia College, New York City, }
March 4th, 1869.

JOSEPH MAURAN, M. D. :—

At the Eleventh Annual Meeting of our Association, the following resolution, proposed by Samuel T. Hubbard, M. D., was unanimously adopted :—

Resolved, That the thanks of this Association be tendered to its President, Dr. Joseph Mauran, for the able and interesting address he has delivered, and that a copy of it be requested for publication.

Respectfully yours,

ELLSWORTH ELIOT, M. D.,
Secretary.

PROVIDENCE, May 3d, 1869.

ELLSWORTH ELIOT, M. D., *Secretary, &c.* :—

Dear Sir,—Having received numerous requests, from distant States, for copies of my late Address before the Alumni, I feel constrained, though reluctantly, to waive my objections, personally expressed to you, and permit its publication in accordance with the unanimous desire of the Association. Trusting that the hints therein suggested may eventually assist in leading to the adoption of acts for "General Registration of Vital Statistics" throughout all the States,

I remain, my dear Sir,

Respectfully yours, &c.,

J. MAURAN.

Y^YA^YB^YL^YL^Y T^YR^YA^Y

1145
1867

A D D R E S S .

ALUMNI :—It was justly said by a scholastic enthusiast, that among the numerous anniversaries, there are none more interesting than those in which we come up from the cares, and the turmoil, and the contentions of the world, to the sacred halls of learning, to witness the proficiency, and, to do honor to the merit of our youthful brethren,—who, having completed their collegiate course, are about entering on the duties of society,—and to welcome them, as we do most cordially, as fellow-laborers in the field of life.

This occasion, being the semi-centennial of my own graduation, carries me back a full *half-century*, to the period when, standing, as they do, on the threshold of existence, I gazed eagerly into the future; not with clouds and darkness resting on it, but glowing with the sunshine of hope, and peopled with the brightest visions of youthful expectation. It carries us all *forward* to the day, when they will look *back*, like us, on *realities* :—Alas ! to many how different from their dreams !

It is good for us *both* to contemplate the past and the future,—to look round on our actual position, and forward to the *task* before us ; and, personally to consider in what manner we may best favor its perfect accomplishment. And, from the extraordinary march which our profession has made in the past quarter of a century, we are naturally led to the conclusion, that the generation now rising into active life, in this country,

is destined, through the increased facilities of the present age, to exert a great and salutary influence upon the whole human race.

In an "Address" which, through your courtesy, I had the privilege to deliver before this enlightened association, on their sixth anniversary, after narrating *personal reminiscences* of our respected Alma Mater, her *then* professors, and of "Old New York" some fifty or more years since, soon after the permanent organization of the college in Barclay Street, I hinted summarily, to a few of the numerous practical results and advantages which would obtain from a perfect system of "Registration of Vital Statistics" throughout all our States and Territories; developing *benefits* not only to the Physician, the diligent observer, in furtherance of professional research, but through him indirectly, eventually, to the whole human family. I now propose, very briefly, to exhibit a few additional practical results of its utility, drawn mostly, however, from the experience of foreign reports, (this country having but recently agitated the subject), thus hoping to enlist, through the efforts of the rising professional generation, an interest that will, at no distant day, secure Registrative Enactments throughout our wide-spread domain.

This species of investigation concerns *every individual* in the *community*, relating, as it does, to the great subject of human life, its reproduction, development, continuance and decay; how far each is influenced, by seasons, locality, disease and other circumstances. Its *object*, it will be perceived, is twofold,—*first*, to preserve the name, and afford the means of identifying the connections, and some facts concerning the personal history of *every* person who is born, marries, or dies in the community; and, *secondly*, to determine how health, life and longevity are affected by age, sex, condition and occupation; by climate, season and place of residence; and by the diseases to which, under any circumstances, man may have been previously subjected. Through an examination of the *early* records of several States, I learn that they have attempted, *though vaguely*, by *legal enactments*, to secure a partial regis-

tration of births and marriages. These have been succeeded by various amendments, to adjust their supposed emergencies and defects, but all evidently abortive. In fact, from the published reports of attendant proceedings, it is presumable that these successive enactments were effected simply for *municipal* and not for those great *sanitary* and genealogical purposes involved in our present system of registration; their object being then directed simply toward the establishment of statistical data of the place of *nativity* of each inhabitant, and solely in connection with the question of pauperism.

As indicated by the following blank forms of returns, you will perceive that we now contemplate a wider, more extended object:—

Form of Blanks used in Rhode Island.

[No. 1.]

RETURN OF A BIRTH.

Ward.....

- | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----|---------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Date of Birth? | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 2. | Full Name of Child? | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 3. | Sex? | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 4. | Color? | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 5. | Number of Child of Mother? | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 6. | Place of Birth, Street and No.? | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 7. | Father's Name? | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 8. | Father's Age? | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 9. | Father's Occupation? | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 10. | Father's Birth Place? | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 11. | Mother's Name? | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 12. | Mother's Maiden Name? | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 13. | Mother's Age? | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 14. | Mother's Birth Place? | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 15. | Remarks? | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |

Informant.

N. B.—At No. 2, give the full name of the child, and be particular to get middle names in full. At No. 4, state whether the child is white, black, or mulatto. At No. 5, state whether it is the 1st, 2d, 3d, &c., child of the Mother. At No. 6, give the street and number, if in the city; the town and State, if elsewhere in the country. At Nos. 8 and 13, give the age at the last birthday. At Nos. 10 and 14, give the town and State, if in this country.

If the child was still-born, or has died since birth, state the facts at No. 15, with any other facts of interest.

In case of twins or triplets, a separate blank is to be filled for each child.

[No. 2.]

RETURN OF A MARRIAGE.

1. Full Name of Groom? - - - - -
2. Place of Residence? - - - - -
3. Age in years? - - - - -
4. Occupation? - - - - -
5. Place of Birth? - - - - -
6. Father's Name? - - - - -
7. Mother's Maiden Name? - - - - -
8. Full Name of Bride? - - - - -
(Maiden Name if a Widow?) : - - - - -
9. Place of Residence? - - - - -
10. Age in years? - - - - -
11. Place of Birth? - - - - -
12. Father's Name? - - - - -
13. Mother's Maiden Name? - - - - -
14. Number of Marriage? Of Groom? - - Of Bride? - -
15. Color of the parties? - - - - -

N. B.—At No. 15, state whether white, black, or mulatto. At No. 14, state whether this marriage is the 1st, 2d, 3d, &c., marriage of each. Give middle names in full.

City or Town of - - - - - 18

We, the Groom and Bride named in the above certificate, hereby certify that the information given is correct, to the best of our knowledge and belief.

GROOM.

BRIDE.

Signed in presence of - - - - -
and - - - - -

N. B.—The above blanks must be filled, and the certificate must be signed by both Groom and Bride, and must be given to the person about to solemnize the marriage, *before* the marriage can be legally solemnized in the State of Rhode Island.

[No. 3.]

RETURN OF A DEATH.

City of _____

1. Date of Death? - - - - - 18
2. Name in Full? - - - - -
3. Age? - - Years - - Months - - Days?
4. Place of { Street and Number? - - - - -
5. Death? { Ward? - - - - -
6. Sex? - - - - -
7. Color? - - - - -
8. Condition? - - - - -
9. Occupation? - - - - -
10. Where Born? - - - - -
11. Father's Name? - - - - -

[No. 3—Continued.]

12. Mother's Name? - - - - -
 13. Parents' Birthplace? Father's? - - - Mother's? - - -
 14. Where Buried? - - - - - Informant.

N. B.—At Nos. 4 and 5, give the place where the person died. At No. 8, state whether married or single, widow or widower. At No. 13, state the country in which each parent was born.

Physician's Certificate.

Date of Death? - - - - - 18
 Name? - - - - -
 Disease? 1 Primary - - - - -
 " 2. Secondary - - - - -
 Duration of Disease? - - - - - Physician.

I certify that the above is a true return, to the best of my belief.

Undertaker.

To the casual observer, these may seem to be diffuse and somewhat complex. Our reasons, however, for these *minutiae* are, that individual identity cannot otherwise be obtained with any degree of success or precision; and their *propriety* must be apparent to every reflecting mind upon the subject.

A few, and very few only, of the States have, within the past quarter-century, secured systems, more or less perfect, of registration. Our sister State—Massachusetts—may be considered the pioneer; her example was soon succeeded by my native State—Rhode Island—where we have now, under the personal supervision of our accomplished and highly efficient Superintendent and Registrar General, Dr. E. M. Snow, a perfect model of Vital Statistics.* The State of New York, some years since,

*The large element of foreign population in all the cities and villages of the New England and Middle States, and the absolute inefficiency of earlier registration returns, suggested to our Registrar, Dr. Snow, a highly important feature in our mortality returns, that of *parentage* in contradistinction to simple returns of *nativity*, and for obvious reasons, viz:—

"It is well known, that the foreign population, as a class, in this city and in other cities in this country, are under entirely different sanitary influences from the American population. The greater portion of the foreign population live in a miserable class of tenement houses, with all the want of conveniences, and positively injurious influences of such houses; their social habits are not calculated to preserve health; and a knowledge of the laws of hygiene is

made strong efforts to procure like enactments, but, I regret to add, as yet, ineffectually. Your city, however, under the early untiring efforts of Dr. Griscom, and since, through her highly efficient Board of Health and energetic Registrar, can now boast of an admirable *municipal* system; although it is feared, judging from your report of 1867, that ere long your goodly city may be depopulated, as nearly 100 per cent. more deaths than births are recorded. (Births, 12,569; deaths, 23,443.) However, reports of births can only be secured, with comparative truthfulness, through domiciliary visitation.

The importance of perfect *records*, in all our States, must be apparent to every reflecting mind, involving, as they do, the various *civil* relations of society; securing to all classes numerous legal rights, *now*, wholly unenjoyed. They would not be the source of gratification to those who are fond of genealogical investigations merely, but would be a repository of facts and evidence to adjust questions touching the dearest rights and interests of individuals and communities. It has been well said by an eminent English jurist, that it is fully as necessary, for the preservation of the rights of individuals, to preserve a registry of *births*, *marriages* and *deaths*, as of *deeds*, as a right to a legacy may equally depend upon the *date* of a death or of a marriage contract. It is also a well known fact, that there are more changes of titles to property, by births, marriages and deaths, now wholly *unrecorded*, than through registries of *deeds* which are invariably recorded with the extremest care and precision. For its prospective results, I might adduce, as a further argument for immediate registrative action

entirely wanting among them. Of course, the children of foreign parents are subject to the same injurious influences upon health, and suffer from them more than the parents themselves.

"It is evident that any classification of mortality statistics should include the children in the same with their parents. This is done by the classification according to *parentage*; but the classification, according to *nativity*, would include nearly all the children of foreign parents with the American population."—From the "*Fourth Annual Report on Births, Marriages, and Deaths*," in the *City of Providence, for the year ending December 31, 1858*, by Edwin M. Snow, M. D.

in all our States, the countless millions of treasure of our ancestry *lost!* and now swelling the coffers of the British Crown; which would have long since been distributed to rightful heirs in this country, but for our absolute inability, through neglect of early colonial registration, to exhibit such satisfactory evidence of *consanguinity* as is now contemplated. Here I would instance Jennings's estate which, in 1848, amounted to some 50,000,000 pounds sterling, and many others similarly circumstanced. Again, evidences of relationship are easily lost among the *lower* classes of society, and, indeed, among *all* classes. There are many individuals and families who know not their grand-parents, nor can they state their *own age* from any record, except that of the family bible, (if accessible or extant,) by tradition, or after calculating the date of some other remarkable family event, which has been associated with that of their own birth! In truth, the physician's day-book has presented the only source for such information, as my own long experience and that of my cotemporaries can assuredly testify. It is, in fact, problematical, whether one person in a hundred, over fifty years of age, of our immediate friends, in this city or elsewhere, could prove legitimately his own birth right through recorded evidence of the marriage contract of his parents.

Such defects should not longer exist. Even the humblest individual ought to find, in the public records, the means of identifying his parents, and of tracing his connections and genealogy. The wealthy can better afford the expense of obtaining other kind of evidence to establish their rights than the poor, but even to them the record that we contemplate may present a consideration of vast importance.

Municipal authorities and others conversant with our pauper system, and questions of settlement, and the annoyances in determining the legal rights of those thrown by misfortune upon them for support, must have appreciated the gross defects of our present system, and the absolute necessity of a more efficient law. It will readily be perceived by all, that the

species of information now sought embraces not only *economical* but national and scientific objects.

To the statesman, engaged in the study of political economy, these *Reports* are of vital importance, bearing, as they do, upon all questions connected with population—the source of a State or nation's greatness, and the evidence of its prosperity or decline. But to the *physician* they are peculiarly useful as through their close and philosophical investigation, he obtains light upon the intricate nature of disease, nowhere else to be obtained. To the *philanthropist*, they suggest the cause and the cure for those moral, physical and social evils which ever and anon affect alike individuals and the body politic. As official documents, they carry a weight and consequence upon the great subject of statistical research far in advance of individual effort, however judicially or efficiently pursued. Again, while "Registration" thus adjusts man's affairs in a national, scientific and pecuniary point of view, it also secures those of a higher moment—his personal existence or well being, by furnishing an accurate statement of the degree of every one's predisposition to disease, whether the malady of which his ancestors died is susceptible of being inherited,—and in this manner contributes largely to illustrate the subject of mortal, hereditary diseases, and the remedy of their concomitant entailments of misery and wretchedness to posterity.

A record of *births* and *marriages* also, by permitting the investigator to trace up the genealogy of a family and its collaterals through several generations, would aid materially in determining the influence of consanguinity, constitutional peculiarities, social condition, &c., upon the procreative faculty, and the hereditary transmission of disease. It would furnish *data* for determining, as in England, whether large families, the issue of *early* marriage, really increase the productive power of the State in proportion to their numbers, or, in other words, whether as a general rule, a numerous progeny is consistent with a high degree of physical or mental vigor. Finally, it would show the good or evil consequences of *disparity of years*

in the parties contracting marriage, and, various other interesting facts in the great, never-ending problem of life.

In the plan of Registration now inculcated, a record of *deaths* shows not only the total mortality occurring in a given population, but the *cause* destroying life in every case; and consequently becomes of immense value to the physician, and through him of incalculable good, as heretofore remarked, to the community at large.

I would not exhaust your patience, but cannot refrain to mention, in this connection, some curious facts now being developed both in Europe and some sections of this country upon the subject of reproduction.

Those from rural districts are doubtless aware that experimental observations have shown that with sheep and some other inferior animals, certain measures pursued in coupling, have appeared to exert an influence in determining the sexes; so also in reference to our own species. An attentive inspection of the very extensive reports, made in several of the most enlightened countries of Europe, has proved, most conclusively, that every influence operating in a community to maintain a high state of physical health and energy, leads to an increase in the proportion of *male* births, whilst on the contrary, every agency, whether moral or physical, the effect of which may be to reduce the forces of organic life, will diminish such preponderance. In many parts of Europe, where the general population is over-worked and underfed, the excess of male births is very small. In Prussia and France, this excess is under six per cent., and in England about five for the Kingdom at large, whereas, in most sections of this country, where the general condition is so favorable, the male births generally exceed the female about seven per cent. Except in a few States and prominent cities; the aggregate, annual mortality of our population is entirely unknown, and the proportion due to different causes cannot even be conjectured, nor, know we the forms of disease which prevail; still less of the relative mortality occurring in cities, towns, manufacturing villages, rural districts and particular localities, and of that affecting persons of different

ages, sexes and social condition, nor is any more accurate information possessed in regard to the modifying influences exerted by Epidemics upon the average mortality of different places, and those of transitory medical constitutions upon ordinary diseases—all of this species of information the truly medical adviser requires and ought to enjoy. Again, a well kept registry of *deaths* would show that in certain places, and among certain classes of people, the mortality is either greater or less than that affecting the community at large, and would thus lead to the most salutary practical results, by enquiring into the *causes* which operate injuriously upon one place or class, and those which confer upon others a comparative immunity. Further, such a record would also reflect much light upon the laws of epidemic and endemic diseases, and medical constitutions, illustrating, by a careful research of the enquirer, their cause and proper mode of treatment. I need not add that many of the foregoing remarks and propositions are derived from the investigation of the experiences and observations of other countries, our own, except in a few States and populous cities, having been, until very recently, almost totally neglectful of the subject,—but, we look forward with sanguine expectations, that, in this respect, a new and auspicious era is about to dawn upon science and society. A few of the Western and Southern States are attempting a revival of their former acts, impaired by the late rebellion, and we trust that, through the recent, efficient action of your medical society, the *Empire* State will ere long be enabled to secure a perfect Act of Registration.

In illustration of the foregoing propositions, I might allude to the Report of the Commissioners to the British Parliament, wherein it appears that the statements made in successive Reports of the Registrar General, of excessive mortality in various places, had induced the philanthropic to search out its causes. Their inquiries resulted in the removal of cess-pools, and accumulations of filth and putrid substances,—in the digging of sewers, &c., and with the most happy results. In *Manchester*, by simply paving and draining twenty streets, so

great an amelioration in the health of those districts was obtained, that but an average of ninety deaths took place where one hundred and ten occurred before. During the cholera epidemic of 1866, this city, through the prompt and efficient action of your excellent Board of Health, experienced similar happy results. Instances of a like character might be multiplied indefinitely.

Not unfrequently the received opinion of the healthfulness of a place has been directly contradicted by the evidence of successful registration. This, says the Registrar General, was the case in Liverpool. Its rapid prosperity and increase of population was supposed to be the result of its great salubrity, but successful registration disclosed the fact, that, at all periods of life, the chances of living there are actually less than in any other place of equal population; and while, in Surrey and other sections, a child at birth has a chance of living forty-five years, *there* its chance of living is reduced to twenty-five! There is too much reason for apprehending that Americans generally err greatly in their estimate of the healthfulness of this country. It has been calculated, from statistics heretofore established, through our imperfect Census Reports, that while the average age of the whole living population of the United States is *twenty-two* years and *two* months, that of all living in England and Wales is *twenty-six* years and *seven* months. It has also been shown, that while but about fifty-six per cent. of the population of the United States survive the age of fifteen, and four per cent. only that of sixty, nearly *sixty-four* per cent. of the population of England survive the former, and more than seven per cent. the latter age. These facts are confirmed mutually by statistical results and common observation.

European travellers in this country wonder that so few old persons are to be met with! and Americans abroad are surprised at seeing so many persons, advanced in life, engaging still in active pursuits, and retaining the cheerfulness and vigor of middle age. We cannot conceive it possible that the mortality amongst the well-fed and well-clothed inhabitants of this country should so much exceed that of the compara-

tively wretched masses of the English people; or that so few amongst the former should survive the labors of active life, to guide and counsel their descendants, unless there is some radical error in our habits of living, or some peculiarly noxious influences, of a general kind, were acting upon the population. Some of these evil habits and influences may indeed be conjectured, and their malign effects in particular cases averted, but until the results of Registration demonstrate their existence and character upon a large scale, the *people* will not be induced to believe them real, or take pains to *escape* their influence. The degree of mortality in ordinary diseases depends chiefly upon two circumstances: the condition of the party, and his treatment. If therefore it is found that deaths from certain diseases are especially frequent amongst persons of certain ages, constitutions, habits, &c., or in certain trades, professions, or situations, the causes of such susceptibility may be traced and removed. Many other *examples* might be cited of the results of perfect registration solving the laws and problems of life; a few of which I will adduce from the evidence afforded through the History of Registration in other countries. "Among the first communities," says the Report to the National Medical Association, 1847, "to establish a perfect system, embracing births, marriages and deaths, was Geneva, where it began as early as 1549, and has since been continued with great care." The registers are there viewed as preappointed evidences of civil rights, and it appears that human *life* has wonderfully improved since they were kept,—its mean duration having increased more than *five times* from 1550 to 1833. "Towards the close of the seventeenth century, the probable duration of life was not twenty years, at the close of the eighteenth it had obtained thirty-two years, and now it has arrived to *forty-five*, while the real, *productive power* of the population has largely increased, and rendered Geneva a State of high civilization." In *Prussia* also, where everything connected with *life* and its well-being is strictly enforced, *there* registration is perfected; in *England* they commenced in 1753, and perfected their most admirable system, under the protec-

tive auspices of the leading statesmen of the times, in 1834.* In France, however, we have, or rather had, previously to the last Revolution, a *perfect* system ; much more so than we, under our restless, migratory population and free democratic institutions can ever expect or ~~over~~ hope to establish. In many other European States, *facts* in connection with this subject are registered and collated in a scientific manner, and with the most beneficial results ; while in this country, until very recently, in a few States, we have been, in this respect, culpably neglectful. A *personal* instance (not, however, deemed to be exceptional) may here be cited in illustration of our national negligence in legal registration. Although I have *recently*, industriously sought by record and tradition, in my native birth-place, absolutely in vain, for the christian, maiden name of my *maternal* grandmother, (who deceased many years previous to my birth,) yet, while abroad, some few years since, we were enabled in Villa Franca, near Nice, Italy, my Father's birth-place, to trace back, with the utmost facility, precision and exactness of *minutiae*, my *paternal* ancestry, together with all the collateral branches of the family for nearly three hundred years !

even

"The Registers of the ancient Romans, which were preserved with great care, and recorded the births, sexes, periods of puberty, manhood, age at death, &c., kept by order of Domitius Ulpianus, prime minister of Alexander Severus, afford us even to this day, the means of ascertaining the mean duration of life in Rome nearly two thousand years ago ! and by comparing this with the results of estimates made at the present day, in places where similar records are kept, we are thus enabled to establish the gratifying fact of the great extension of the average of human life in various cities and countries."†

*Since the delivery of this address, I had the pleasure to receive through the courtesy of Theodore James Jacques, Esq., Registrar General of Sydney, New South Wales, a highly interesting copy of their "Twelfth Annual Report on Vital Statistics," which exhibits, in its summary and details, great zeal, energy and perfection.

†Report of National Medical Association, for 1847.

We will allude to but one other of the many advantages suggested by faithfully kept records throughout all the States; the formation of "*Life Tables*," exhibiting the probabilities or expectation of life; upon which are based those beneficent institutions, now becoming quite popular in this country, (as they have long been in England and on the continent,) *Life Assurance* and *Annuity Societies*. It may not be generally known, that until recently in Massachusetts, we have heretofore been indebted *wholly* to foreign registration (the *Carlisle* and *Northumberland tables*) for their *establishment*! such should not continue the humiliating fact. Again, from the very imperfect Registration now established in this country, our statistics represent human life, in the United States, of shorter duration than in England. "But as it might be expected," says an English statistician, "from the similarity of the human organization that all classes would, *ceteris paribus*, live, on an average, the same number of years," it becomes important to ascertain whether this *be* the case, and if it be not, to determine to what extent life *is* shortened under unfavorable circumstances. The *Life Table* answers this purpose, "and is," says the same authority, "as indispensable in sanitary inquiries, as the barometer or thermometer and other instruments in physical research. By this simple method, the mean duration of life, uncertain as it appears to be, and as it *is* with reference to *individuals*, can be determined with the greatest accuracy in nations, and in still smaller communities. Upon applying it to any number of well defined cases, the influence of any external cause or combination of causes, can be analyzed; while without its aid and extended observation and calculation, we are liable to be misled at every step by vague opinions or interested statements, in estimating the relative duration of life,—which can no more be made out by *conjecture*, than the relative diameters of the sun, moon and planets of our system." If these things are so, and of their truthfulness, no intelligent mind can doubt, it is obvious that with this measure are entwined the dearest earthly interests of the human family. *When, therefore, our system of Registration shall have been*

established, as we trust it, ere long, may be in all the States, a comparison of the duration of successive generations would eventually throw much light on the physical condition of our respective populations, and suggest to the scientific and philanthropic enthusiast, and to State governments, many measures for diminishing the sufferings and meliorating the condition of the people.

I experience a peculiar pleasure and gratification, in the occasion thus courteously extended, to present the cause of the impoverished and diseased before this enlightened and appreciative assemblage of my professional brethren,—to show that by reducing the amount of sickness and death, the means of the poor, and consequently, the wealth and power of every State are increased; while through our continued supineness and neglectedness, the opposite alternative would be the contingent. Now, (all appreciative minds admitting the manifold advantages of General Registration of Vital Statistics in a *genealogical* and *sanitary* point of view, throughout our country,) as the subject to the masses is novel, and the requirements necessary to be enforced are, by the *people*, deemed to be arbitrary and intrusive; how are their servants, legislators (generally equally uninformed) to be approached to establish the preliminary enactments? We answer, and advisedly so, by simple, individual, personal efforts,—County and State Medical Societies should inaugurate the primary movement by the appointment of *committees* (which, by the way, rarely meet or coöperate) to memorialize, formally, legislative action; but, further than that, *collective* appeal is useless, wholly nugatory and unavailing, their *chairman* alone (informing himself thoroughly upon the subject) must take the laboring oar, and relax not his daily, indefatigable, personal efforts before the legislative committees and legislatures until the work is done,—the fact accomplished. Such was the experience in Massachusetts, and, through our individual, untiring labor, was the Act for Rhode Island established, and subsequently our admirable municipal institution, the “Superintendent of Health.” This Metropolis, if we mistake not, is indebted largely, primarily, to *individual* ex-

ortion for its present, highly efficient system. Therefore, the circumstances being thus, shall we indulge the hope, that some statistical enthusiast may be induced, in each and every State, to take the initiative and secure, at no distant day, like results throughout our entire domain. *Shall it be done?*

LANE MEDICAL LIBRARY

This book should be returned on or before
the date last stamped below.

--	--	--

R
708
M45
1869
LANE
HEST

